FAA Radar – Introduction

What is a definition of historical? There are instances where the passing of many years must occur for an event to be regarded as history. World War 2, Korean War and Vietnam War are examples. There are other instances where history becomes almost instantaneous, such as with contemporary computer technology. You buy a PC today, and tomorrow it is obsolete because of the rapid change of technological development.

For the purpose of this Fleet Air Arm Radar history, with one exception I have regarded as historical all those aircraft not currently in operational use. That one exception is the Westland Sea King, introduced to Fleet Air Arm (FAA) service in 19XX (1), and as at 2007 is still contributing excellent support to Australia's defence capability. Having stated this, it should be kept in mind that that the FAA formed in July 1947 has had a number of aircraft not fitted with radar. For interest only, these are listed in appendix XX. Those current in operational use are the Westland Sea King (mentioned), Sikorsky SH-60 Seahawk, Kaman SH-2 Seasprite and Aerospatiale Squirrel.

Much has been written and published about the history of RAN air operations including the aircraft, the associated ship and land bases and the operational roles. It is not intended that this information will be repeated here, except where necessary to put the topic into perspective.

Unlike other historical accounts of naval aviation history where there exists considerable detail of specifics such as engine types, armament etc, there is no single source of general information abour naval aviation radar. Certainly there are separate records dealing with different aspects of the subject, but this is the first attempt to bring the separate accounts together into a coherent story. As well as dealing with the technical aspects, attempts have been made to record operational details and personal experiences.

I acknowledge the considerable support given to me by many people in bringing this project to a conclusion, and openly admit that without that spirit of co-operation, this chronicle would not exist. I have listed them in alphabetic order by name towards the end of this publication.

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